

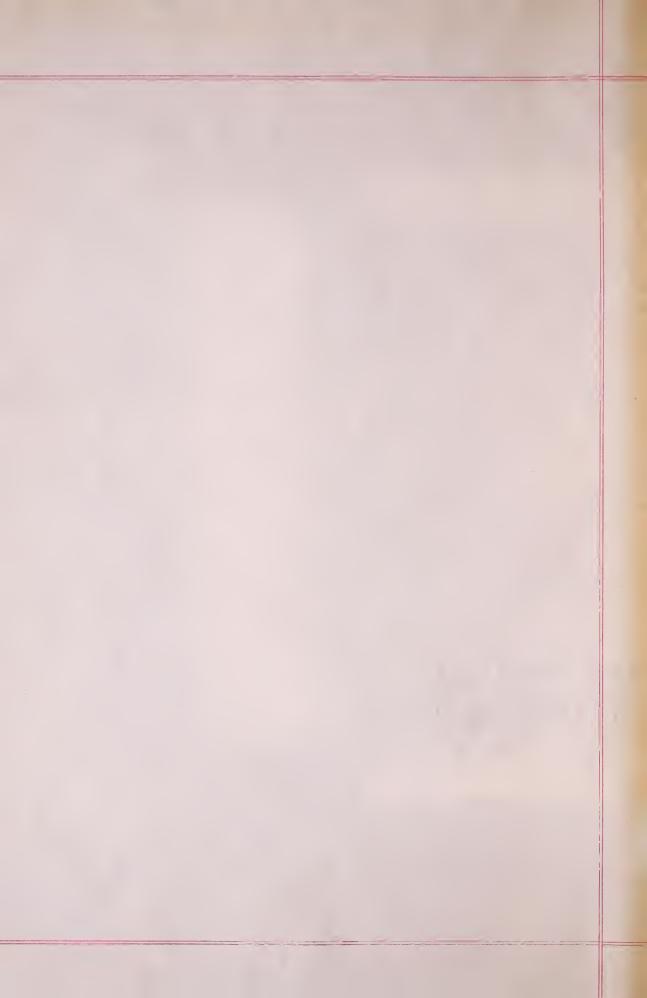
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## BOSTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

HOSEA AS A RELIGIOUS PIONEER

by

Viola Corine Spreckelmeyer (A.B., Baker University, 1930)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts 1935

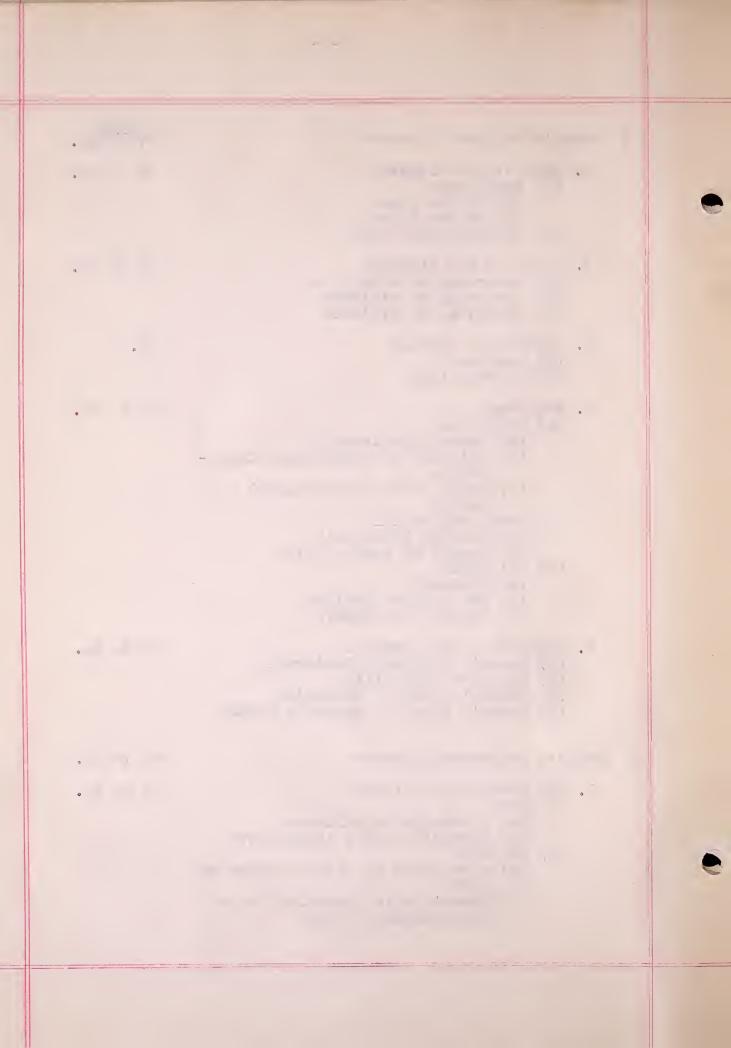


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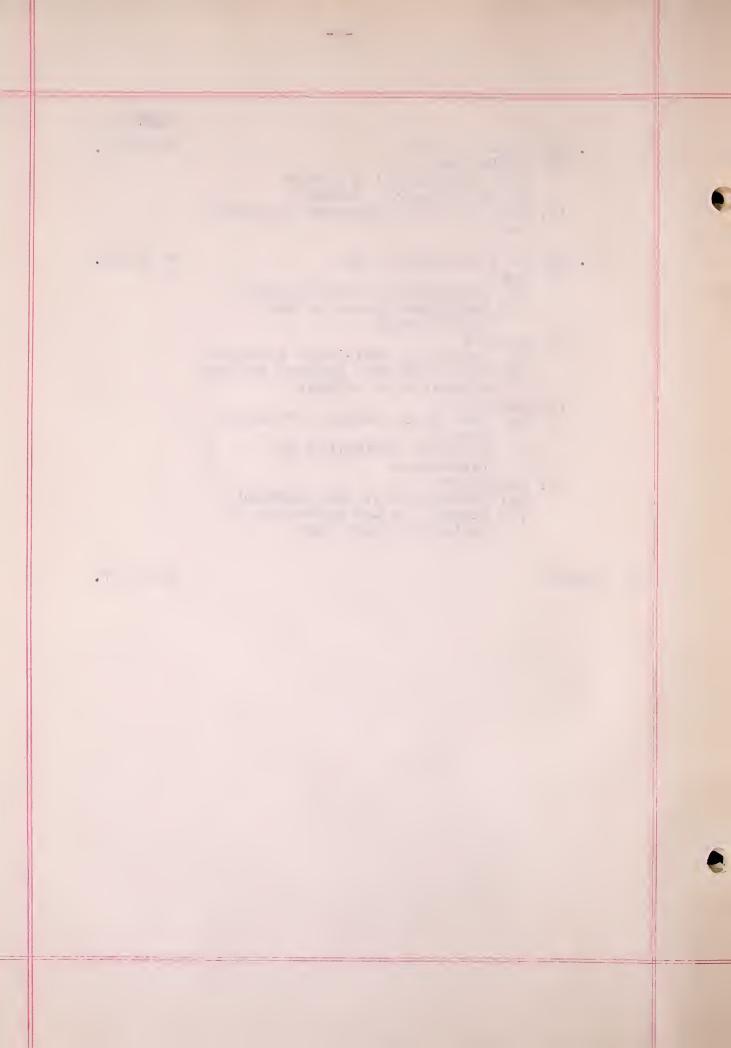
repentance

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#### I Introduction

It is a privilege to enter into the theater of the written page and see thrown on the mind's screen a portrayal of life with its great characters. Through the passing of the ages there have been countless manuscripts of biography. of history, of science, of philosophy, and of religion. them are contained the contributions of those who have gained light from the eternal torch of truth.

Some of the illuminations have been as beacon lights thrust against the darkness of night. There have also been lesser lights, but their limitations have only served as stimuli to greater concentric circles. The ancient synagogues rated Hosea as the first of the twelve lesser prophets.(1) But "by reason of his spiritual insight"(2) he is today considered as "a prophetic star of the first magnitude".(3) Prophecy was with him more of the New Testament type, an inspired preaching which revealed God to man."(4)

4. Crafter, T. W., The Book of Hosea, p. 8.

Cf. Briggs, C. A., Messianic Prophecy, p. 164.
 Wallis, L., Sociological Study of the Bible, p. 185.
 Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 194.

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#### II The Source Material

With the exception of some extra-canonical material the Book of Hosea is the only gateway to the prophetic soul of the pioneer, Hosea. This Ephraimite literature is the only survival of an Israelite prophet. It is also one of the two "earliest surviving books of Hebrew prophecy".(1)

The fourteen chapters of the Book of Hosea are divided into two parts, Chapters 1 to 3 and Chapters 4 - 14. The time element and the subject matter form a basis for this division. Chapters 1 - 3 were written during the closing years of the reign of Jeroboam II. "We know this", writes Harrell, "because in the first chapter of his book Hosea refers to the 'house of Jehu' as the reigning family (1.4,5). Six months after the death of Jeroboam II the 'house of Jehu' fell (II Kings 15. 10)".(2) Since no reference is made to the invasion of Judah by Israel and Damascus in 735 to 734 B.C., the only explanation of the silence regarding this important event is that it had not taken place. The conditions reflected in Chapters 4 to 14, existed in Israel "from the death of Jeroboam II to about 735 B.C."(3) The date and historical setting of the book will be discussed more fully in dealing with Hosea's prophetic career.

<sup>1.</sup> Gray, G. B., A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament,

<sup>2.</sup> Harrell, C. J., The Prophets of Israel, p. 61.
3. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 366.

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The subject matter of the first three Chapters deals with the life story of the prophet. The second Chapter is "a sermon-poem on the metaphor it has suggested. maining eleven chapters contain detached oracle-poems, in which the same ideas of infidelity and penalty constantly recur, without sensible progress, except that the book culminates in a confession of sin and a promise of divine grace. "(1) "The first (division) may be regarded as in the nature of an introduction to the second. In it the prophet states his standpoint, gives us the key to his message as a whole. key is this: Jehovah's relation to Israel is that of a hus-Israel, however, has gone astray, has proven herself a faithless wife. Jehovah, therefore, as a righteous husband, feels compelled to put her away. But so deep and genuine is his affection that he cannot allow her to be permanently alienated from her. So he redeems her from her bondage, awaits the time when she will be worthy of full restoration to his favor."(2) "Never", writes T. W. Crafter, "was a man less separable from his message. First he lived it, and then he spoke it."(3)

The following outline of the Book of Hosea is taken from F. C. Eiselen's book, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, Volume II, p. 355-357:

Robinson, H. W., in the Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 761.
 Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 104.
 Crafter, T. W., The Book of Hosea, p. 7.

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Hosea's Domestic Experience an Illustration of Yahweh's I. Love and Israel's Faithfulness (1. 2 to 3. 5)

1. Hosea's wife and children (1.2-9: 3.1-3).

(1) Marriage of Hosea and birth of Jezreel (1.2-5)

(2) Birth of Lo-ruhama (1.6, 7). (3) Birth of Lo-ammi (1.8, 9).

(4) Restoration of the outcast wife (3.1-3). 2. Interpretation of the acts and names in the story of Hosea's wife and children (1.10 to 2.23; 3.4,5).

(1) Promise of a glorious restoration (1.10 to 2.1).

(2) Faithlessness of Israel (2.2-5)

- (3) Evil consequences and punishment of Israel's faithlessness (2.6-13).
- (4) Disciplinary effect of the judgment, and future exaltation of Israel (2.14-23; 3, 4, 5). a. Restoration of Israel to intimate fellowship

with Yahweh (2.14-17).

b. Permanent peace, undisturbed by man or beast (2.18).

c. New betrothal in righteousness (2.19, 20).

d. Extraordinary fertility of the soil (2.21, 22).

e. Israel's reestablishment and loyalty (2.23).

f. Judgment and the subsequent Messianic age (3.4,5)

Hosea's Prophetic Discourses (4.1 to 14.8).

1. Awful condition of the people due to a lack of knowledge of Yahweh, for which the priests are responsible (4.1-19).

(1) Moral corruption in every day life (4.1-10). a. Moral corruption of the people (4.1-3).

b. Responsibility of the religious leaders (4.4-8).

c. Judgment upon priests and people (4.9. 10). (2) Moral corruption connected with the religious cult (4.11-19).

a. Religious corruption of the masses (4.11-14).

b. Inevitableness of judgment (4.15-19).

2. Utter corruption -- inevitable doom (5.1 to 8.14).

(1) Rebuke of Israel's apostasy -- the time of mercy is past (5.1-15). a. Rebuke of Israel's apostasy (5.1-7).

b. Time of mercy past (5.8-15).

(2) Israel's superficial repentance and Yahweh's reply (6.1-11a).

a. Return of the people to Yahweh (6.1-3).

b. Yahweh's reply: Superficial repentance not acceptable to Yahweh -- the corruption is incurable (6.4-11a).

(3) New picture of the moral degradation -- resulting anarchy and destruction (6.11b to 8.3).

a. Divine mercy and the people's apostasy ( 6.11b to 7.2).

b. Present state of anarchy (7.3-7).

c. Israel, blinded by her folly rushes headlong to destruction (7.8-16a).

#### (Continuation of outline)

d. Imminence of a hostile invasion (7.16b to 8.3).

(4) Israel's political and religious practices an

abomination to Yahweh (8.4-14).

3. Present rejoicing contrasted with despair of the exile (9.1-9).

4. Series of retrospects showing the upper corruption of Israel (9.10 to 11.11).

(1) Israel's apostate and rebellious from time immemorial, doomed to destruction (9.10-17).

(2) Israel's guilt and punishment (10.1-8).

(3) Israel's history -- one continuous crime; Israel's destiny -- death and destruction (10.9-15).

(4) The father's love for the prodigal son (11.1-11).

5. New series of indictments (11.12 to 12.14).

- (1) Condemnation of Israel's faithlessness; exhortation to repentance (11.12 to 12.6).
- (2) Israel's unholy ambition and bitter disappointment (12.7-14).

6. Israel's glory turned to shame (13.1-16).

(1) Israel's apostasy its own death warrant (13.1-3).

(2) Love -- ingratitude -- doom (13.4-8).

(3) Utter destruction the just punishment for Israel's guilt (13.9-16).

7. Israel's repentance -- Yahweh's pardon (14.1-8). Epilogue - Exhortation to study the book of Hosea (14.9).

In determining the authorship of the Book of Hosea, the scholars find themselves confronted with a text that has been greatly corrupted in its transmission. Again and again the Hebraist must leave some passages unsolved. A. B. Davidson concludes that: "A <u>multitude</u> of passages are corrupt, some incurably."(1) The following are examples: 4.4; 7.3-7; 11.7; 12.1 ff. It is difficult to reach a true text.

Gratz in his Geschichte, pp. 93 ff., 214 ff., 439 f. distinguishes two Hoseas who are separated by a period of fifty years. It is true that the style of the two divisions is

l. Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, article, "Hosea" p. 419 f.

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different. The second division is "impulsive and abrupt beyond all comparison. There is little rhythm in it, and almost no argument. Few metaphors are elaborated. Even the brief parallelism of Hebrew poetry seems too long for the quick spasms of the writer's heart...He speaks in little clauses, often broken off; he is impatient even of copulas. And withal he uses a vocabulary full of strange words, which the paucity of parallelism makes much the more difficult."(1) This change of style is not significant, however, in determining a second author for the book of Hosea. The occasion and the motive of each division regulates the style. It is to be noted that the religious principles are identical in both divisions and that there are many characteristic expressions in both. The same temper which is the distinctive quality of Hosea's personality is found throughout the book.

It is only within recent times that the Book of Hosea has not been commonly accredited to the prophet Hosea. "We cannot suppose", concludes T. K. Cheyne, "that Hosea delivered any part of the book in its present form; it can only be a reproduction by the prophet himself of the main points of his discourses, partly imaginative, partly on the basis of notes."(2) Scholars such as Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti and Harper question an increasing number of passages. The more

<sup>1.</sup> Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 220. 2. Cheyne, T. K., Hosea, p. 19.

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important additions and glosses that Harper enumerates are:

1.1, 7, 9 to 2.1; 2.2b, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18-23; 3.5;

6.11a, b; 7.4; 8.1b, 8b, 10-14; 9.9; 10. 3, 4, 10, 14b; 11.8b,

9a, 10b, 11, 12b; 12.3b-6, 12, 13; 14.1-9. Marti considers

all references to Judah as secondary in 1.1, 7, 10; 4.15;

5.5, 10, 12, 13, 14; 6.4, 11; 8.14; 10.11; 11.12b; 12.2a.

All promises of restoration are placed as secondary also:

1.9 to 2.1; 2.13b-23; 3.1-5; 5.15 to 6.3, 5b; 11.10, 11; 14.

1-9. These lists from Harper and Marti show to what an extent modern criticism denies entire authorship to Hosea."(1)

It is to be noted briefly that chapter 1 is not written in the first person. This bit of biography has been credited to a friend or disciple of Hosea who also arranged and collected the material left by the prophet.(2)

The Judean sections have given some difficulty. J. E. Mc Fadyen thinks it is very doubtful that Hosea alludes to Judah. It is evident that some references are interpolations (cf. 1.7). Most of them, he concludes, are suspicious.(3) G. B. Gray in his A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament explains that the Book of Hosea "owes its survival to post-exilic collectors or editors of the southern kingdom and apparently has undergone a Judaean revision".(4)

<sup>1.</sup> Cheyne, T.K., Hosea, cf. Eiselen, F.C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 358.

<sup>2.</sup> cf. Eiselen, F.C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 365.

<sup>3.</sup> Mc Fadyen, J.E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 178 f. 4. Gray, G.B., A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 206.

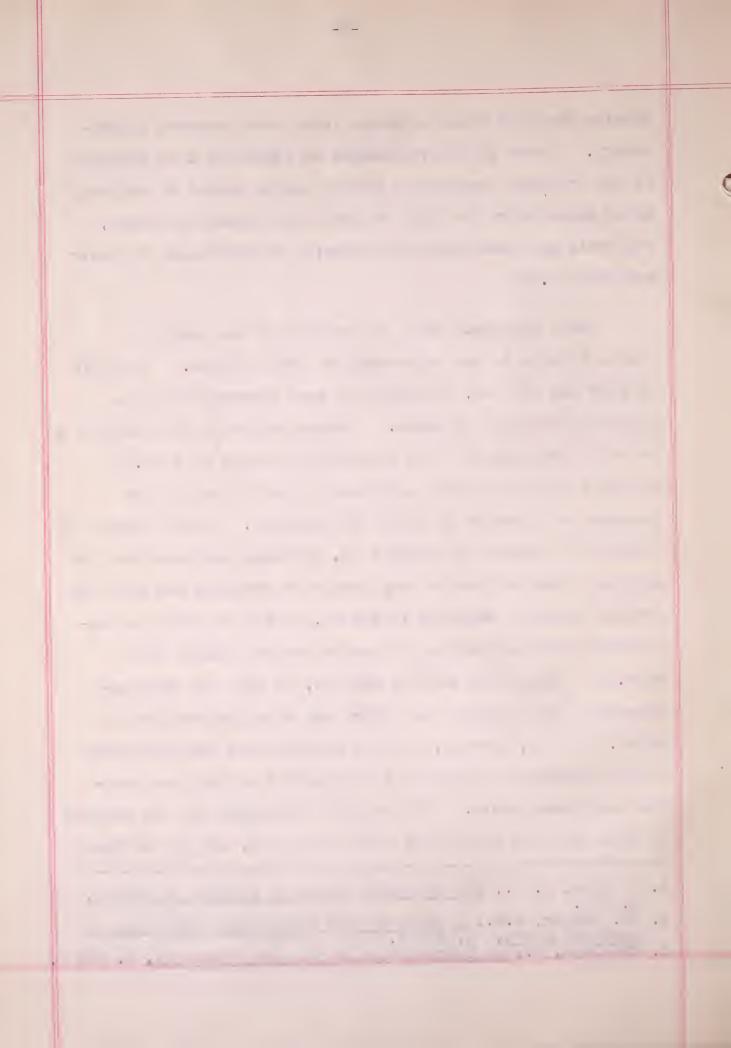
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Eiselen does not think a formal Judahistic revision is necessary. "Some of the references to Judah may have appeared in the original prophecies; others may be traced to marginal notes added after the fall of Israel by readers in Judah, who could not understand the scarcity of references to their own country."(1)

More important than the problem of the possible Judean version is the authorship of the epilogue. chapter was written, according to some commentators by a spiritual disciple of Hosea. Harper maintains that Chapter 14 is not in keeping with the pre-exilic message of doom. (2) Specific objections have also been raised in particular passages to a change in style and language. Since Chapter 14 weakens the warning of Chapter 13, Creelman suggests that the original order of the two may have been reversed and that the present order of Chapters 13 and 14, is due to editorial adjustment with the purpose of having the book close with Since the text is corrupt, it does not seem unhope (3) reasonable to conclude that there may be a dislocation of It is, however, more in keeping with the life story of the prophet, if Chapter 14 is regarded as the last chapter that Hosea wrote. "It would be monstrous for the prophet to have hope for his erring wife to the end, and yet declare

<sup>1.</sup> Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 365.

<sup>2.</sup> cf. Harper, W.R., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, p. 208 f.
3. Creelman, H., An Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 142 f.



that God had finally flung off faithless Israel, whether they repented or not."(1) Eiselen writes this conclusive statement:

"Now, it may be granted that the age of Hosea called for messages of warning and judgment, and, no doubt, he delivered such messages with all the force and energy he could command, on the other hand, it is equally true that promises of a brighter future might offer a powerful incentive to the people to change their conduct for the better. The promises are not made unconditionally; their fulfillment presupposes repentance and a return to Yahweh on the part of the people. Why such promises must be rejected as unsuitable in the days of Hosea or contrary to the prophet's point of view is not easily seen."(2)

The materials of alleged secondary elements, not considering the words and sentences of minor importance, group themselves as follows: (1) "References to Judah; (2) passages picturing the glories of the future; (3) phrases and sentences of a technical archaeological or historical character, inserted by way of explanation; (4) miscellaneous glosses and interpolations for which no special motive may be discovered...

(3) "While the book" writes H. W. Robinson, "is not entirely free from later interpolations, the later elements are by no means as numerous as some recent writers seem to think.

Moreover, the later additions do not modify in any fundamental way the teaching of the prophet Hosea."(4)

4. Ibid., p. 761.

<sup>1.</sup> Crafter, T. W., The Book of Hosea, p. 20.

<sup>2.</sup> Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament p. 361.

<sup>3.</sup> H. W. Robinson in The Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 761.

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#### III An Introduction to Hosea.

The mystery of life with its development of personality always creates an interest in heredity and environment.

But after a background is secured, we again find ourselves face to face with the unknown depth of personality itself.

#### 1. Parentage.

Little is known of the life of Hosea. According to Chapter 1 verse 1 Hosea was "the son of Beeri", but S. L. Brown, knowing that "true patronymics are rare in the Old Testament", (1) suggests that Beeri may be the name of a tribe. Hawley, Eiselen, Cheyne, and Hastings, however, accept Beeri as the name of the father. Beeri according to Jewish writers is identified with Beerah, a Reubenite prince, who was taken into exile by Tiglath - pileser (I Chronicles 5.6). In the early Christian tradition Hosea is related with the tribe of Issachar from a place called Belemoth or Belemon. The form Belemon has been compared with Balamon which is near Dotham. (2) According to Jewish fancy Hosea's father was also a prophet. Verses 19 and 20 of Isaiah 8 are declared to be the words of Delitzsch in his Biblical Commentary on The Prophecies of Isaiah gives this footnote:

"Strangely enough, verses 19 and 20 are described in Lev. Rabba, Chapter 15 as words of the prophet

<sup>1.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xi. 2. Hastings' A Dictionary of the Bible, p. 420.

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#### 2. Environment and Interests.

It may be useless to glean from the source material with the purpose of becoming acquainted with the environmental influences of Hosea. The result of the research can only be conjecture. Even though some of the questions cannot be factually answered, we can indirectly become acquainted with some of Hosea's experiences by investigating their reflections in his thought life. Although there will be no means of determining the time length or the circumstances involved in them, there will be an approach to the personality of Hosea.

#### (1) His Education

The extent of Hosea's education is not known.

His education was sufficient not only to pass judgment on the history of the nation, but to follow and place an estimation on the politics at home and abroad as is shown in 7.1-11 and 5.13f. C. F. Kent writes: "Unlike the rough shepherd who had been educated in the school of experience, Hosea was familiar with the growing literature of his race."(2) Hosea's book gives evidence not only of his ability to write, but it portrays distinctive knowledge of poetical form as is shown by his sermons. The following illustration is taken from Chapter 6, verses 1 to 6:

<sup>1.</sup> Delitzsch, F., Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, p. 241.

<sup>2.</sup> Kent, C. F., The Sermons, Epistles, and Apocalypses of Israel's Prophets, p. 15.

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Come, and let us return unto the Lord: For he hath torn, and he will heal us; He hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: In the third day he will raise us up, And we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, If we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared As the morning; And he shall come unto us as the rain, As the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, And as the early dew it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: And thy judgments are as the light That goeth forth. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; And the knowledge of God More than burnt offerings..... 6.1-6 (1)

<sup>1.</sup> Gray, Selections from Old Testament Literature, p. 166 - 167.

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### (2) His Occupation

There are no indications by which the occupation of Hosea can be ascertained with any certainty. T. H. Robinson suggests that he may have been a baker which he bases on 7.6-8:

"For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me."

The basis of this interesting figure of speech may not have been founded on experience.

Hosea's love of the desert would at first suggest that he may have lived with "the tent-dwelling Rechabites (II Kings 10.15; Jeremiah 35), a guild or tribe famous for its puritanism and fidelity of the nomadic ideal."(1) On closer observation, however, it will be seen that Hosea's point of view does not meet this conclusion. Canaan is not a sinful land (2.8; 10.11; 2.15, 22; 14.7) because it has agricultural interests, but because it is the habitat of the Baals. To him the wilderness is a place of peril. In it men die from thirst (2.3; 13.5); springs and fountains become dry (13.15) from the hot, scorching winds (12.1); the lion and the bear wait to prey on the traveler (13.7, 8). This closer examination of Hosea's point of view does not fit the suggestion that

<sup>1.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xiii.

· . . . . . • • \$ 9 \$ - · a a • ¢ 1 à  he was a Rechabite. Sellin explains Hosea's love for the wilderness not for its own sake, but on the basis of prophetic interest.(1) As Hosea recalled the nation's history the wilderness experience seemed like an oasis. Then the Israelites did not know the cult of the Baal.

There have been some students of Hosea who have decided that he probably was a member of the priestly class.

"With greater probability it has been conjectured that he was a priest. He has, for instance, an unusually high conception of the duty of the priesthood in the matter of popular education. He looks upon the priests as in a large measure responsible for the morals of the people.... But not only does Hosea show unusual insight into the responsibility of the priesthood; he also reveals a rich knowledge of the past history of a priest, such as one would naturally expect of a priest (9.10; 10.9; 11.1; 12.3; 13.1). Then, too, he is acquainted with a written Law, in which it was apparently the special function of the priest to give instruction (4.6; 1.12). Still further, it may be noted that he speaks of 'the people that doth not understand' (4.14) in a way that implies that he belonged to those who know the requirements of the Law."(2)

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xiii. 2. Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, pp. 96-97.

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Sellin concludes that Hosea's acquaintance with the special sins of the priests (cf. Chapter 4) hardly warrants the conclusion that he belonged to the priestly circles; according to 9.8 ff., he certainly belonged to the fellowship of the Nebhi'im.(1)

From the repeated metaphors of a countryman's daily life Hölscher finds sufficient evidence to suggest that Hosea was a peasant. He piles stones in a heap (12.11) and surrounds it with thorns and fence (2.6). He plows the land and sows grain (8.7). The dew causes the corn to grow (8.7) and the weeds in the furrows (10.4). At harvest time the corn is threshed (8.7) and separated from the chaff (13.3). Flax as well as barley is harvested (2.5, 9). Grapes, figs, and olives are grown (2.5, 8f., 12; 7.14; 9.2). These metaphors do show Hosea's acquaintance with agricultural life.(2) It has also been maintained that Hosea was a man of the city. T. H. Robinson writes that many of Hosea's analogies and figures are drawn from the life of the townsman. His most striking figure of speech seems to have been taken from the bakehouse. (3) On the basis of repeated references to nature and agricultural life (4.16; 5.1, 2; 10.14; 6.1, 3, 4; 7.11, 12; 8.7,9; 9.1, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15; 10. 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12; 11.4, 10, 11; 12.2; 13.3, 7, 8, 15; 14.5) there is stronger evidence

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xiii.

<sup>2.</sup> Ibid, p. xiv.
3. Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 79.

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that Hosea like Amos was a man of the country. (1)

#### 3. Character and Temperament

The book of Hosea is written from the depth of the prophet's experience. It is particularly true of Hosea that 'le style c'est l'homme'. According to C. H. Cornill it is this subjectivity and this individuality which distinguishes the Book of Hosea. Heart-born chords are mastered with a power and a fervor unknown to other prophets.(2) "The style of Hosea corresponds to his strength of feeling, and is passionate, almost tempestuous. Yet there is at times a sense of extraordinary tenderness." It is true that "the style of Hosea is unique among the prophets." The style is expressive of Hosea's emotion. "His sensitive soul is full of love and sympathy for his people; and his keen perception of their moral decay, and of the destruction towards which they are hastening, produces conflict of emotions .... reflected in the pathos, and force, and artless rhythm of sighs and sobs. "(3) "The swift transition, the fragmentary, unbalanced utterance, the half-developed allusions .... express the agony of this inner conflict."(4)

Hosea is a lyrical poet whose imagery is richer than

<sup>1.</sup> Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, p. 419 f. 2. Cf. Cornill, C. H., The Prophets of Israel, p. 51.

<sup>3.</sup> Driver, S. R., An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, pp. 305-306.

<sup>4.</sup> Harper, W. R., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, p. CXLV.

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that of Isaiah.(1) It is characteristic of Hosea to paint his images in one word.(2) There is suggestive power in his figurative language.

"Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." - 13.3

The range from which Hosea took his images suggests not only his "poetic sensibility", but also his profound sympathy with nature and his love of creature life. In his images he dealt with the animal world, with the lion, the panther, and the bear (5.14; 6.1; 11.10; 13.7, 8), with the birds (7.11; 9.11; 11.11), and with the snares used to trap them (5.1, 2; 7.12: 9.8). There are images taken from agricultural life in which he refers to stubborn cattle (4.16; 9.15), to harnessing, to threshing, to plowing, and to harrowing (10.11 ff): to the work of the husbandman such as sowing and reaping (8.7: 10.12 ff.). Some images give a general reflection to country life, to the fig and vine when it is choice (9.10; 10.1), to the poppy (10.4), to the thorns and thistles (10.8), nettles (9.6) and reeds (13.5), to the rains of the seasons (6.3: 10. 12), to the dew and morning cloud (6.4; 13.3), to the swollen brook (10.7) and to the desert wind (13.15).(3) Hosea's images taken from human life have an element of pathos. In

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xvi. 2. Cf. Hastings, <u>Dictionary of the Bible</u>, p. 420. 3. Ibid. p. 420.

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chapter 7, verse 9, "Ephraim's decadence among the nations is like grey hairs coming up on the head of one old before his time".(1)

The vibrant style, the imagery of poetic insight, and the depth of sensitivity reveal in the character of Hosea a profound capacity for great, prophetic ministry. "It was the passionate and poetic nature of Hosea that made him just the medium through which the divine mercy (which is hidden even in the heart of retribution) could make itself known."(2)

<sup>1.</sup> Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, p. 420. 2. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 55.



### IV Hosea's Personal Experiences

### 1. His Domestic Experience

### (1) Views of the first three chapters.

The question of Hosea's marriage as related in the first three chapters has received various interpretations.

The more important interpretations of these chapters are classified (1) as a vision, (2) as an allegory, (3) as a real experience.

Maimonides suggests that these chapters report a vision.

Other interpreters who support this view are Kimchi, Hengstenberg, Keil, Wünsche, and Töttermann. "This view," states

H. G. Mitchell, "does credit to the ethical judgment of those who adopt it, but it is exegetically indefensible."(1)

Another group of scholars who are opposed to a literal interpretation maintain that the marriage was an allegory. Those who hold this view are De Wette, Schröder, Hesselberg, Hitzig, Schmoller, Reuss, and König. It is true that sometimes the prophets did perform acts that had a symbolic meaning (Isaiah 8.1; Jeremiah 28.10; I Kings 22.11), but there is no evidence in the narrative of Hosea which suggests its parabolic character. There is the stamp of reality and only a literal interpretation can meet the demands of the language.(2)

<sup>1.</sup> Mitchell, H. G., The Ethics of the Old Testament, p. 127. 2. Eiselen, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 375.

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In establishing this view attempts have been made to find an allegorical meaning in such names as Gomer ("Come to an end," "consummate wickedness") and Diblaim ("two lumps of pressed figs", "sweetness of sin").(1) The name "Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim" may have been well known in Hosea's day. mann suggests that "it may .... have been the name of some semi-legendary character like Semiramis, or perhaps that of some notorious harlot of the time; in which case the symbolical character of the narrative would have been clear at once to the reader."(2) Sellin states: The name Gomer is not susceptible of an allegorical interpretation. Eiselen writes that it is generally admitted that the name of Gomer does not yield a symbolical meaning. Although all the details of an allegory do not need to have symbolical significance it must also be noted that the symbolism of names does not establish an allegorical interpretation. (3) An analogy is furnished by Isaiah (7.3; 8.3) who gave his two sons symbolical names. This parallel would suggest a literal interpretation. In further establishing the allegorical interpretation, it has been urged that the command to take "a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom" (1.2) cannot have literally been given to Hosea. It must be recognized, however, that

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Lecture notes from the course, Old Testament Prophets by Dr. E. A. Leslie.

Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, pp. 99 - 100.
 Sellin, E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 159.

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the moral difficulty cannot be removed by an allegorical interpretation. If this command would have been repugnant, it seems certain that Hosea would not have selected it. If the prophet had a faithful wife it does not seem credible that he would have raised suspicion about her infidelity.(1)

The third view of the first three chapters presents
the marriage as an actual experience of Hosea. Difficulty
has arisen in the attempt to construct a consistent story.

Marti rejects the third chapter as a later insertion.

Robinson and Steurnagel see chapter three as a fragmentary
account of the same events included in chapter one.(2) To
Sellin the narrative of chapter one and chapter three is
homogeneous.(3) This view makes Gomer an adulteress at the
time of her marriage; it makes Hosea accept such disloyalty in
marriage. In accepting the first three chapters as real experience it seems more reasonable to conclude that "chapter
three represents another phase of the whole experience and
supplements chapter 1. 1-9"(4) According to the American
Revised Version, 3.1-a reads:

"And Jehovah said unto me, Go again,
Love a woman beloved of her friend,
and an adulteress."

4. Dr. E. A. Leslie Op. Cit.

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 375.

<sup>2.</sup> Cf. Lecture notes from the course Old Testament Prophets by Dr. E. A. Leslie.

<sup>3.</sup> Sellin, E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 159 f.

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As translated from the Hebrew it should read:

"And Jehovah said unto me, Go, still

The meaning of "still" in Hebrew has the idea of continuity in it. "Still" modifies "love" rather than "go". Thus we can think of Chapter three as a supplement. William Robertson Smith, a most careful scholar, comes to this conclusion from Hebrew usage. This view eliminates the necessity of concluding that Hosea knew Gomer as an adulteress before he married her. There is consistency in this conclusion. Scott thinks that Chapter 3 should be inserted between verses 9 and 10 of Chapter 1.(1)

# (2) The Experience.

Hosea married "Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim" (1.3a). He regarded their relation with the sacredness of "trustful love" as is shown in Chapter 2, verses 19 and 20.

"And I will betroth thee unto me forever;
Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in
righteousness, and in justice, and in
lovingkindness, and in mercies.

"I will even betroth thee unto me in
faithfulness; and thou shalt know
Jehovah."

When a son was born Hosea named the child Jezreel, a symbolical

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Lecture notes from the course Old Testament Prophets, by Dr. E. A. Leslie.

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name, which means "God sows". This name is significant in that it designates the judgment of God on Ahab who had taken the vineyard from Naboth (cf. I Kings 21. 14 f.).

"Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." 1.4b

But the joy of Hosea was turned to the depth of indescribable suffering and sorrow. With the birth of a second child he learned of Gomer's infidelity. Because of his grief Hosea named the baby girl Lo-ruhamah (1.6) which means "she hath not been compassioned." Hosea, however, did not follow the long established Semitic practice of banishment.(1) His attempt to save Gomer from faithlessness only deepened the tragedy. The only name he could give the second son, also born out of wedlock, was Lo-ammi (1.9), meaning "not my people".

Gomer, tired of her husband's idealism, (2) left the home, showing no concern for the welfare of her husband and children. But Hosea could not dismiss her from his affection. In chapter 2 we can read between the lines of his constant

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Kent, Sermons, Epistles and Apocalypses of Israel's Prophets, p. 15.

<sup>2.</sup> Harrell, C. J., The Prophets of Israel, p. 63.

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care for her and of his desire for her return. He sought her by means of her children's pleadings (2.2), by pity for her children (2.5), and by fear (2.2-4). Secretly he provided her with food.(1)

"For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal." 2.8

As Arthur said to Guinevere, Hosea might have said:

".....I love thee still.

Let no man dream but that I love thee still."

As a last resort Hosea went to Gomer's master and bought her from slavery for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley (3.2). By discipline he would win her to loyalty. The memory of this period of probation must underlie this prophetic utterance to Israel:

"Therefore, behold, I will alure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." 2.14

This period of discipline must also have contained a hope for repentance.

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days when she

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Houghton, L. S., Hebrew Life and Thought, p. 187 f.

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came up out of the land of Egypt." 2.15

The narration is discontinued here. No suggestion is given of Hosea's later married life.

### 2. His Religious Experience.

Some students of Hosea's life have maintained that his tragic marriage led him to become a prophet. Noyes states that "the call to prophecy came to Hosea not in a vision, but as an actual experience. His wife, whom he loved ardently, proved unfaithful".(1) Batten says, "Amos was led to prophesy by reason of divinely given insight; Hosea was directed to the same task by domestic affliction of the sorest kind which can come to an upright soul. "(2) Hosea was already a prophet when Jezreel, the first child was born. Verse 3 of Chapter 1 makes it clear that the first son was born in loyalty. W. Robertson Smith says that Hosea tried to conceal his wife's infidelity, but A. B. Davidson's effective reply is that he certainly did not try to retain his experience later. "It is then clear," says Dr. A. C. Knudson, "that Hosea's call to the prophetic office preceded his tragic domestic experience."(3)

It is to be noted, however, that Hosea's prophetic

3. Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>1.</sup> Noyes, C., The Genius of Israel, p. 347.

<sup>2.</sup> Cf. Knudson, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 102.

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ministry was greatly influenced by his personal experience. (1) He traced the analogies of his experience with Gomer to Yahweh's relation to Israel. Just as he had wooed and married Gomer, so Yahweh in the days of the wilderness had entered a covenant relation with Israel. Even as Hosea had been faithful to Gomer throughout the years, so Yahweh had shown his continual love for Israel. As Gomer had turned to her paramours, so Israel had turned to the worship of the Canaanite Baalim. Even as Hosea sought to win Gomer again so Yahweh sought to restore Israel.(2)

We learn of this tragedy in Hosea's life, not merely because it happened, but because Hosea's character was "refined by that human passion of merciful love".(3) In the loneliness of his own struggle he learned from his suffering to love the more deeply. As he reflected on the bitterness of his experience he recognized God's presence in it. Dean Plumptre in his poem, "Gomer", has well expressed Hosea's interpretation of his early history.

> "Through all the mystery of my years, There runs a purpose which forbids the wail Of passionate despair. I have not lived At random, as a soul whom God forsakes;

Sellin, E., <u>Introduction to the Old Testament</u>, p. 159
 Cf. Kent, C. F., <u>The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah</u>, pp. 86-87. Cf. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 57.

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But evermore His Spirit led me on, Prompted each purpose, taught my lips to speak, Stirred up within me that deep love, and now Reveals the inner secret. (1)

Hosea's message was fused with a new content, a new urgency.(2) The supreme recompense of his grief was "the consciousness that his experience had been, not a meaningless affliction, but a parable of the divine love -- the revelation that the love of God was eternal and could never be shaken by his children's sins."(3) Since Hosea had sought Gomer's highest good, would not Yahweh do even more for Israel? The agonizing exclamation of Hosea "O Gomer, how can I let thee go?" found its echo in the infinite appeal, "O Israel, how can I let thee go?" Hosea might have said in Tennyson's words,

> "And all is well, tho' faith and form Be sunder'd in the night of fear; Well roars the storm to those that hear A deeper voice across the storm. "(4)

The new revelation was the eternal love of God. (5)

<sup>1.</sup> Lazarus and Other Poems cf. Kent, The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, pp. 84-85.

<sup>2.</sup> Knudson, Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 103.

<sup>3.</sup> Houghton, L. S., Hebrew Life and Thought, p. 207.
4. Cf. Cadman, S. P., The Prophets of Israel, p. 43.
5. Cf. Houghton, p. 207. Op. Cit.

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### V Hosea's Prophetic Career

# 1. Date of his ministry.

There are two references in Hosea's book which places his ministry in the reign of Jeroboam II:

"The word of Jehovah that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." 1.1

"And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." 1.4

According to Sellin verse 4 in chapter 1 is authoritative:

"The first public appearance of Hosea did actually take place in the time when the house of Jehu, to which Jeroboam II belonged, was still reigning."(1) The testimony of chapter 1 verse 1 cannot be final.(2) The editor of this verse dated a northern prophecy by a northern prophet under (1) four southern kings, covering 789 - 693 B.C. as maximum, and 740 - 720 as minimum; (2) one northern king (782 - 746)(3). The

<sup>1.</sup> Sellin, E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 158.
2. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 365.

<sup>3.</sup> Robinson, H. W., The Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 761.

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contents of verse 1 enable, however, a fairly accurate calculation.(1) It is partly consistent with the facts.(2)

Dr. Knudson states: "The names of these Judaean kings were probably added by some later scribe; but the addition is trustworthy in so far as it implies that Hosea's ministry continued beyond the reign of Jeroboam. Jeroboam died about B. C. 740 ...."(3)

A period of anarchy followed the death of Jeroboam II.

The greater part of Hosea's prophetic service seems to imply such a period of chaos as that during the rapid succession of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah.(4) "This state of affairs," writes A. C. Knudson, "is clearly reflected in the last eleven chapters of the book of Hosea."(5) Sellin has selected the following quotations, which seem to reflect this period of chaos:

- 1. "They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges; all their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me." 7.7
- 2. "They return, but not to him that is on high; they are like a deceitful bow; their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their

<sup>1.</sup> Robinson, H. W., The Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 761. 2. Harper, W. R., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary,

<sup>3.</sup> Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 92. 4. Sellin, E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 158. 5. Knudson, A. C., p. 93, Op. Cit.

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tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt." 7.16

- 3."As for Samaria, her king is cut off, as foam upon water." 10.7
- 4. "So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: at daybreak shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off." 10.15
- 5."Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?" 13.10

Since no allusion is made to the Syro-Ephraimitic War of Pekah and Rezin against Judah (Isaiah 7; II Kings 15. 37, 38), it may safely be concluded that "Hosea was not in active service at the time (734 - 733 B.C.)... One cannot imagine silence on his part with reference to events of such importance."(1) Hosea also makes no reference to the Assyrians who captured Gilead in 734 B.C. Thus the message of Hosea cannot be any later than 735 B.C. In "The Chronology of the Old Testament" by Dr. E. A. Leslie the prophetic ministry of Hosea is dated from 750 to 735 B.C.

The Chronological Table:

"785 - 745 Jeroboam II

760 Prophetic ministry of Amos

750 - 735 Prophetic ministry of Hosea

744 Zechariah

<sup>1.</sup> Harper, W. R., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, p. CXLI.

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#### Continuation of Chronological Table:

744 Shallum

743 - 737 Menahem

738 Menahem pays tribute to Tiglathpileser III (Pul).

737 - 736 Pekahiah

736 - 734 Pekah

734 Syro - Ephraimitic War. Rezin (Damascus) and Pekah (Israel) against Ahaz (Judah).

733 - 732 Tiglathpileser places Hoshea on the throne of Israel.

733 - 722 Hoshea

722 Sargon captures Samaria. Fall of Israel."
(1)

## 2. Place of his ministry.

Hosea did not refer to his native town as Amos did.

Nor has an editor done so as in the case of some early nonliterary nabis. Tradition records that Hosea was a native of
Gilead.(2)

According to Ewald in <u>Prophets</u> I, p. 211 Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom. "In every sentence", says Ewald, "it appears that Hosea has not only visited the kingdom of Ephraim, as Amos has done, but that he is acquainted with it from the depths of his heart, and follows all its doings, aims, and fortunes with the profound feelings gendered of such a sympathy as is conceivable in the case of a native prophet only."(3) Elmsie has also been quoted in dealing

<sup>1.</sup> Leslie, E. A., Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 110.

<sup>2.</sup> Hawley, C. A., The Teaching of the Prophets, p. 66.
3. Cf. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, pp. 370 - 371.

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with this view. He says: "The words of Amos sound like a voice from outside, pealing with the thunder of God's anger and righteous indignation against wrongs and injuries that Amos does not feel himself bound up with. The characteristics of Hosea's book is that the burden of Israel's guilt lies weighty on his soul; he wails, and mourns, and laments, and repents with that sinful people."(1) S. L. Brown advocates that Hosea was a citizen of the Northern Kingdom because "his allusions show him to be acquainted with the Ephraimitic traditions represented by the document E (II. 15; IX. 15; XI. 8; XII. 12); and only an Ephraimite could speak so intimately of the religion, morals, and politics of the Northern State."(2) Dr. A. C. Knudson in his book, The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, warns against an undue emphasis on this admitted difference between the two prophets as a means of proving that Hosea was a citizen of the Northern Kingdom. He writes that the attitudes may depend quite as much to a difference in temperaments.

"Amos was a stern man, a man of clear thought and firm will, who stood to some degree apart from the common life of men. Hosea, on the other hand, was a man of deeply emotional nature, rich in his affections, a man who by instinct entered sympathetically into the lives of others. Had he,

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, pp. 94 - 95.

<sup>2.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. XI.

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like Amos, been a native of Judah, his message would in all probability have been the same in spirit that it now is. For no such gulf separated the two kingdoms as is sometimes supposed. Conditions in Judah were not essentially different from those in Israel. The things that united the two realms were far deeper and more significant than those that divided them."(1)

there is decisive evidence that Hosea's home was in the Northern Kingdom. He refers to the king of Israel as 'our king' (7.5)(2). Israel is 'the land' (1.) .... and it is 'the house of Jehu' on which the blood of Jezreel shall be visited, and 'the kingdom of the house of Israel' that shall be made to cease (1.4)."(3) It is to be noted also that practically all the historical and geographical allusions are to places and events in the Northern Kingdom.(4) The localities that are mentioned most frequently are Lebanon (14.5-7), Gilead (6.8; 12.11), Mizpah and Tabor (5.1), Gibeah (5.8; 9.9; 10.9), Gilgal (4.15; 9.15; 12.11), Jezreel (1.4; 2.22), Ramah (5.8), Shechem (6.9), and particularly Bethel the religious center (4.15; 5.8; 10.5, 8, 15; 12.4) and Samaria, the capital (7.1; 8.5, 6; 10.5, 7; 13. 16).(5) It is generally accepted that

<sup>1.</sup> Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 95. 2. Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>3.</sup> Hastings, J., A Dictionary of the Bible, p. 419.

<sup>4.</sup> Cf. Kent, C. F., The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 83.

<sup>5.</sup> Cf. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 371.

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Hosea's home was in the Northern Kingdom.

## 3. Historical Setting.

Hosea is the Jeremiah of Israel.(1) He had the same relation in the history of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century as Jeremiah had to Judah a century and a half later.(2) When Hosea began his prophetic ministry the reign of Jeroboam II was coming to a close as was also Israel's era of prosperity.

Six months after the reign of Jeroboam II the line of Jehu came to an end by the assassination of the son Zechariah. The usurper Shallum seized the throne and ruled for a period of one month when he too was put to death by Menahem. Menahem maintained the throne for six or seven years and was followed by his son Pekahiah who after a reign of two years was assassinated by Pekah. During these eight or nine years following Jeroboam's reign, there were seven kings, four of whom met a violent death.

After the fall of the house of Jehu Tiglath-pileser

III became a danger to the Northern Kingdom. He seized the

Assyrian throne in 745 B.C. and finally became the master of

Babylonia and the states of Western Asia. The allusions to

<sup>1.</sup> Stanley, "Lectures on the Jewish Church", ii, p. 369 - Cf. Cheyne, T. K., Hosea, p. 11.

<sup>2.</sup> Harper, W. R., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea, p. CXLI.

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the payment of tribute to Assyria (5.13; 10.6; 12.1) can with some certainty be said to refer to Menahem's payment in 738 B.C. (cf. II Kings 15.19f)(1)

"Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt." 12.1

"It also shall be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and

Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel." 10.6

The raising of taxes for Assyria's demand only increased the moral decay of "the struggling and imperfect confederacy".(2)

### 4. Problems

#### a. Political

Hosea had great concern for the political situation of Israel. National leadership was corrupt and superficial.

"On the day of our king" (which may have been a coronation banquet such as is described in Mark 6.21-26) "the princes made themselves sick with the heat of wine"(7.5a). The fertility cult was endorsed by the court.(3) Intoxicating wines were used to assist the worshiper in gaining spiritual elevation and communion (4.11; 7.5).(4)

4. Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Sellin, E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 158. 2. Cf. Hawley, C. A., The Teaching of the Prophets, pp. 70-71. 3. May, H. G., The Fertility Cult in Hosea, p. 93.

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It can easily be understood how Hosea loathed the debauched conduct of the national leaders (7.4; 4.8) and despised their lack of response to Yahweh.

"All their kings are fallen: there is none among them that calleth unto me." 7.7b.

Public welfare was forgotten. Tribal laws were not maintained by the princes. Boundaries were altered at the loss of another.(1) What contributions had these kings made to Israel?

"Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities?" 13.10a

No attempts were made to correct abuses (7.1-3).

"They made the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies." 7.3

The political leaders had lost their vision; they had become mere tools for social anarchy.(2)

It would, however, not be correct to conclude that Hosea was opposed to the monarchical institution. The references, 9.9 and 10.9 are sometimes quoted to support his negative position, but they are better explained as allusions to the deed at Gibeah (Judges 19-20). It seems more reasonable to conclude that Hosea was only denouncing the kings

<sup>1.</sup> Duff, A., The Theology and Ethics of the Hebrews, p. 54 f. 2. Ascham, J. B., The Religion of Israel, p. 213.

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of the Reign of Terror,(1) since their influence did not promote God's purpose for Israel. Kittel also points out that Hosea's dislike cannot be used as proof against his preference for the Davidic dynasty.(2)

Hosea did not approve of the international policy of his Kingdom (7.8 - 16). Israel, mixed with other nations, was like an unturned cake (7.8-b), not well done. So dominated was it by the foreign element that its strength remained undeveloped (7.9b). National decay was beginning to appear, but the nation did not know of its condition.

"Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not." 7.9

"Like a silly dove" Israel first made alliances with Egypt, its betrayer, and later fluttered for security to Assyria, its deadliest enemy.(3)

Dr. A. C. Knudson in discussing Hosea's position regarding an alliance finds that the prophet did not view it as a method of "political prudence", but as an evidence of disloyalty to God (7.15). Various suggestions have been given as to Hosea's meaning of disloyalty. (1) In ancient time

<sup>1.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xxv and Gordon, A. R., The Prophets of the Old Testament, p. 68.

Cf. Kittel, R., History of the Hebrews, Volume II, p. 327.
 Cf. Kent, C. F., The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 96.

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treaties to a certain extent involved the recognition of the nation's god or gods. On this basis such a treaty would imply distrust of Jehovah. (2) The alliance of a small kingdom with a large empire like Assyria or Egypt would mean an introduction of foreign "customs, rites, and beliefs" which would not harmonize with Jehovah's law. Dr. A. C. Knudson does not think that these explanations are adequate since after the establishment of such a treaty the prophets urged fidelity to it. (3) The most acceptable suggestion is that the mission of Israel was not political but religious. Alliances would thus secularize Israel like the other nations which would be the equivalent to hiring lovers and speaking lies against Jehovah (8.9; 7.13).(1)

## b. Moral and Social

With disorder in the palace and with an unstable government it is not surprising to find that the moral and social life of Israel were at a low ebb.(2) Lawlessness thrived. General corruption was evident in all classes of society. Priests and nobles were particularly rebuked for their leadership (4.1 ff.; 5.1; 6.8 ff.; 7.1 ff.; 9.15; 10.9; 12.9).(3) The family was destroyed by impurity, society by theft and murder. (4)

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, pp. 115-116.

<sup>2.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xxv.
3. Cf. Knudson, A. C., p. 111, Op. Cit.
4. Cf. Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 255.

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"There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, end killing, end stealing, and committing adultery;" 4.2a

### c. Religious

Israel's religion was superficial; it was purely exter-"Religious feelings" were sought by selfish gratinal.(1) fication, by material satisfaction in harvest and vintage, by victory over national enemies. "High places" were to be found on "the tops of the mountains", on hills, near villages, and sometimes near threshing floors (9.1; 4.13; 10.8). each high place was an altar for sacrifice (4.19; 8.11; 10.1 f., 8). A massebhah, a stone pillar (3.4; 10.1), and the asherah, a wooden pole, were used as symbols of God's pre-Images of the deity were also used (4.17; 8.4; 10. sence. 2).(2) The cult of the Golden Calves, introduced by Jeroboam (I Kings 12.28 f.), inclined the Israelites to idolatry(3) (10.5; 13.2).

Worship at the high places were occasions of merriment. Especially was this true on holy days (2.11; 9.1), on Yahweh's feast days (9.5) at the new moons, and on the sabbaths (2.11; 5.7; 9.5). Libations were offered to Yahweh (9.4), sheep

<sup>1.</sup> Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 1.

<sup>2.</sup> Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xxii. 3. Crafter, T. W., The Book of Hosea, p. 2.

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and oxen were sacrificed (5.6), and the roasted flesh was eaten (8.13).

Although Israel acknowledged Yahweh as their God (5.6; 6.2 f.; 7.14; 8.2; 9.1, 5) the Baal of the Canaanites was worshipped in reality.(1) The cult of Baalism became a pattern of worship for the Israelites.(2) Sacred prostitution was practiced at the altars of the high places (4.13). The spirit of Israelitic worhip was heathenish. The true ethical character of Yahweh was forgotten. The Israelites gathered for grain and new wine, but they rebelled against Yahweh.(3)

> "And they have not cried unto me with their heart, but they howl upon their beds: they assemble themselves for grain and new wine; they rebel against me." 7.14

Hosea saw in the tragedy of Israel's religious situation an untutored people. The priests had betrayed their trust; they had made no effort to instruct the people in the Law (4.6). The mission of their high calling was forgotten. Altar service to them was a mere means of earning a living. It paid the priests to keep the people ignorant, since more sacrificial fees were received. (4) Hosea also charged the

<sup>1.</sup> Povah, J. W., The New Psychology and the Hebrew Prophets, 2. Crafter, T. W., The Book of Hosea, p. 2. (p. 114 3. Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 11 4. Cf. Duff, A., The Theology and Ethics of the Hebrews, (p. 114) p. 113.

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the priests with sins of commission. Like snares to the people (5.1 f.) they encouraged sacred prostitution as another means of increasing their salaries (4.8 f.).

"They feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity." 4.8

The sarcastic scorn of Hosea (8.5, 6; 10.5; 13.2) was justified as he recognized the corrupt worship of Israel.

## 5. Solution of the Problems.

Hosea saw the dangers of his country. He spared not the leaders, social, political, or religious, but portrayed to them their baneful influence. His attack on the erroneous life of Israel was fearless.

"The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it." 9.7a, b.
But the people ridiculed him.

"The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad." 9.7c.

Hosea's earnest concern for Israel did acquaint him with madness. Their iniquity gave him no peace. Efforts were made to quiet his prophetic utterances by endangering his life.

"Ephraim was a watchman with my God: as for the prophet, a fowler's snare is in all his ways, and enmity in the house of his God." 9.8

Politically, socially, morally, religiously the people of Israel had forsaken Yahweh. Their fundamental sin was

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unfaithfulness.(1) Hosea's indictment is one word - whoredom.(2) Israel had forsaken the true God.

"Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God; for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah." 5.4

Israel did not have a knowledge of God.

"There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." 4.1b

Hosea knew that the basis of Israel's unfaithfulness was ignorance. (4.1, 6; 6.6; 2.20; 5.4).

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: "4.6a

Hosea knew that righteousness, love, and trust resulted from
a knowledge of God. Thus God said:

"I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." 6.6

Hosea pleaded for Israel's return to God.

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." 10.12

"Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually." 12.6

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 98.

<sup>2.</sup> Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 369.

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### VI Hosea's Pioneering Aspects

#### 1. The Essence of Religion.

John Milton said, "A good book is the precious lifeblood of a master spirit." A better description of the Book of Hosea can scarcely be given. The great creative depth of the prophet's message was founded in the experience of his own life. From his profound grief he gained spiritual and ethical insights which he shared with great prophetic earnestness. Not only did he contribute vitally to the religion of Israel in the eighth century B.C., but his contribution has extended to present day religious thought. Hosea "deepened and intensified religion".(1) "The essence of true religion, according to Hosea, is not to be found in any outward acts of worship, but in spiritual experience, not in sacrifices and burnt-offerings, but in love of God, faithfulness to Him and the surrender of the heart to Him (4.1, 6; 6.3, 4, 6; 7.14; 8.2; 10.12; 12.6.") (2)

## a. Love

The significant contribution of Hosea as a religious pioneer finds its primary source in the teaching that God is love. The prophet's inalienable affection for Gomer taught him that God's love was greater and stronger than Israel's

2. Brown, S. L., The Book of Hosea, p. xxvii.

<sup>1.</sup> Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 98.

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sin.(1) Thus Hosea taught that religion was an act of love.(2) "He in a certain sense stands at the head of all those to whom religion has been the great solace of life, to whom it has meant redemption from sin and triumph over the world."(3) Hosea, "Israel's first evangelist", (4) taught that love was the essence of religion, the ultimate element in religion. From Hosea we have the earliest book in which religion is interpreted in terms of love. (5)

### b. Morality

Hosea, the prophet of real love, grasped a new insight in the promotion of morality. Like Amos, Hosea insisted that the essence of true religion was right living, but to promote right conduct he recognized that he was dealing with more than the rules of conduct. Amos had said,

> "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream". 5.24

Hosea said:

"For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." 6.6 Thus Hosea pierced the visible conduct of the nation to the

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Addis, W. E., Hebrew Religion to the Establishment of

Judaism Under Ezra, p. 165.

2. Cf. Cornill, C. H., The Prophets of Israel, p. 52.

3. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p.

4. Cf. Cornill, C. H., Op. Cit. p. 52.

p. 91.

<sup>5.</sup> Knudson, A. C., p. 91. Op. Cit.

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underlying disposition toward God. He recognized the importance of directing the inner springs of action, the motives and the principles that govern conduct. Hosea may be recognized as a pioneer in character building, in religious education.

Moral offenses according to Amos were violations of the Law. To Hosea they were proofs of disloyalty to God. The source of "all morality was in love to God".(1) Loyalty and kindness between man and man were not duties inferred from Israel's relation to Jehovah; they were parts of that relation.(2) Thus hesed is the motivating power for righteousness.

"It is here", states Dr. A. C. Knudson, "that Hosea's most significant contribution to the doctrine of God is to be found. Amos had once for all established the truth that God is righteousness and that religion is law. What Hosea did 'was to prove in God so great and new a mercy as was capable of matching that law'. Religion, he taught us, was love as well as law, and love, he held, was stronger than law."(3) The spiritual worth of this contribution cannot be over estimated. The joining of righteousness and love in the rela-

<sup>1.</sup> Moore, G. F., The Literature of the Old Testament, p. 19. 2. Cf. Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, p. 162.

<sup>3.</sup> Knudson, A. C., Religious Teaching of the Old Testament, p. 181.

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tion of man to man establishes a new basis for social ethics. Since justice must be tempered by mercy, society can only be restored by righteousness and love.(1) The power of mercy is well expressed by Shakespeare in his "Merchant of Venice".

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;

It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven,

Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;

It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes

The throned monarch better than his crown:

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,

The attribute of law and majesty,

Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

But mercy is above his sceptred sway,

It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,

It is an attribute of God himself;

And earthly power doth then show likest God's

When mercy seasons justice."

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# 2. The Nature of God.

The great soul of Hosea was not defeated. In the long hours of waiting and of hoping, of patience and of love, as he endeavored to win Gomer's loyalty, he found himself meditating on the nature of God. It was evident from history

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 99.

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that God had been leading Israel (12.1-13). By a prophet of God Israel had been led out of Egypt; by the same leadership Israel had been preserved in the wilderness; by the ministry of the prophets Israel had been taught of God's care.

"The more the prophets called them, the more they
went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim,
and burned incense to graven images." 11.2

In spite of Israel's worthless ways God's concern was constant;
He could not leave Ephraim.

Then came the dawn of a great truth to Hosea. God was more than just; He was love. Though Israel had turned to other gods, God was constant (3.1). Hosea recognized God's love, since he knew that love was persistent, that it was kind, that it endured all things.(1)

The pioneering spirit of Hosea promoted an advance in Israel's comprehension of God. Amos taught that God knew Israel, but Hosea desired that God should be known by Israel (2.20; 4.1, 6; 6.3; 8.2; 13.2).(2)

"Hear the word of Jehovah, ye children of Israel; for Jehovah hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." 4.1

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Cornill, C. H., The Prophets of Israel, p. 50. 2. Cf. Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, p. 160.

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"And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth." 6.3

In his great eagerness fully to share his knowledge of God Hosea did not use the word of human affection for the love of God.(1) He selected hesed, a Hebrew word, which corresponds to the Latin pietas or dutiful love, as it shows itself in acts of kindliness and loyal affection. (2) In translating hesed "we need goodness, mercy, and kindness taken together to bring out its full meaning. It always has in it a note of great tenderness".(3) Hosea showed his comprehensive understanding of the nature of God and of His desire for Israel's response by the choice of this word, hesed. This term thus illustrated not only the great nature of God, but it also established an ideal for Israel in its relation to God and fellowmen.

# a. A Physician; a Savior.

As is characteristic of a good teacher, Hosea explained God's nature in the range of the people's experience and knowledge. In 6.1 and 7.1 he described God as a physician.

> "Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 74. 2. Cf. Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, pp. 160-161. 3. Orchard, W. E., Op. Cit., p. 74.

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will bind us up." 6.1

"When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Ephraim uncovered." 7.1a

In another instance he recalled Israel's history and declared that God was their only savior who in His concern for their highest good had redeemed them from bondage.

"I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no god but me, and besides me there is no savior." 13.4

## b. A Husband; a Father.

Hosea's interpretation of the love of God through the relationship of the family forms the basis of his deepest teaching. "Israel is Yahweh's bride (chapter 1 - 3), or his son (11.1), and love must, therefore, be an essential element in his character (11.1, 4; 3.1).(1) The idea of God as a Husband to Israel (2.2-23) was not an original figure of speech with Hosea. "From the earliest days of the Semitic religion, the god of a land was said to be married to the land; he was the baal, the lord, the possessor, the husband of the land, the people... The baal granted fertility to the land -- the corn, the oil, and the wine."(2) Hosea's teaching of God in this figure of speech differed, however, from the Semitic conception in that he believed God's love to be ethical, a

Pace, E., Ideas of God in Israel, p. 189.
 Hutchins, W. J., The Religious Experience of Israel, p. 220.

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love which forever sought the "leal love" of Israel.(1) "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know Jehovah." 2.19 - 20.

The second figure supplied by the analogy of the family is that of God as Father to Israel. (2) This figure is not, however, original with Hosea. "It was previously suggested in Exodus 4.22, 23 (J)", writes Aytoun, "where Yahweh speaks of Israel as his first born to show that He will avenge an injury done to Israel as a father would avenge an injury done to his first-born son."(3) H. G. May suggests that the concept of the fatherhood of God was a contribution from the fertility cult and that Hosea was indebted to the cult for this significant symbolism. (4)

In the figure of God's fatherly love for Israel (11.1-10) Hosea related Israel's history as it has never been told before. God's loving care was manifested at the time of the Egyptian bondage. As a father, God had helped "the infant nation to walk. When calamity was suffered from a fall, he gathered them in his arms and comforted them". He led them

<sup>1.</sup> Hutchins, W. J., The Religious Experience of Israel, p. 220.
2. Knudson, A. C., Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 120.
3. Aytoun, R. A., God in the Old Testament, p. 144.
4. May, H. G., The Fertility Cult in Hosea, p. 98.

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by "loving deeds and gentle persuasion". "When they were wearied by the heavy burdens of life, Jehovah, like the humane ox-driver, at the first favorable moment, released them from their burdensome but necessary yoke, and gave them that food which was needed to revive their strength."(1)

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

"The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

"Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them."

11.1 - 4.

In 11.8-9 Hosea gave Israel an insight of the struggle that God experienced between his fatherly love for Israel and his desire for righteousness.

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together.

"I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,

<sup>1.</sup> Kent, C. F., The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah,

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I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath." 11.8-9

"Both Amos and Hosea agree that Jehovah loves righteousness more than Israel for Israel's sake."(1) It is Hosea, however, who states more clearly that "the triumph of righteousness is a father's discipline for the ultimate benefit of the child".(2)

In Hosea's portrayal of God's nature G. A. Smith regards 11.8 as the "greatest passage in Hosea -- deepest if not the highest of his book".(3) According to Buttenwieser "the fatherly love is Hosea's foremost attribute of God".(4) H. G. May considers this concept of the fatherhood of God as "deep an insight of God's love as appears in sacred literature".(5) Cornill's view is that Hosea's teaching of God's love was "absolutely new". Although Dr. A. C. Knudson does not agree with C. H. Cornill, he concludes that Hosea's teaching marks an epoch in the development of the doctrine of divine love .(6)

<sup>1.</sup> Peritz, I. J., Old Testament History, p. 186.

<sup>2.</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>3.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 121.

<sup>4.</sup> Buttenwieser, M., The Prophets of Israel, p. 247.

<sup>5.</sup> Cornill, C. H., The Prophets of Israel, p. 53.
6. Knudson, A. C., Religious Teaching of the Old Testament, p. 174.

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## 3. Israel's Response to God

#### a. Love

The duties of humanity in primitive society were framed within the family or tribe; relations of love were identified with kinship or with a covenant. David said, "Thou shalt show kindness to thy servant, for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of Jehovah with thee." "In Hosea the conception of a relation of love and kindness between man and God goes side by side with the conception of Jehovah's covenant with Israel."(1)

> "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me." 6.7

"Set the trumpet to thy mouth. As an eagle he cometh against the house of Jehovah, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law." 8.1

Hosea's use of the word hesed gave a new significance to the bond of moral obligation that united Jehovah and Israel. It was more than a compact of legal terms; it was "a bond of piety -- of fatherly affection... and loyal obedience".(2) Hesed was the bond that united Jehovah to

<sup>1.</sup> Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, p. 161. 2. Ibid., pp. 161 - 162.

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Israel. The realization of this bond was more than an attitude; it was "that essential quality of the soul from which love, sympathy, pity, devotion, all spring".(1) Like Amos, Hosea regarded Israel's knowledge of God in the sphere of "justice and the obligations of civil righteousness".(2) The sins of Israel were a proof that Israel had departed from God. The analysis of Amos stopped here. He had an intellectual understanding of the nature of God. Hosea, having had an "immediate experience of a personal God", noted that God "demanded not only right conduct but a right heart".(3) "This truth apprehended by Hosea pointed the way to the highest reaches of Israel's religion."(4) Hosea not only taught that God was love, but he taught that God desired a reciprocal love, a "gracious self-giving ". "Never before", says Bewer, "had the relation between God and Israel been comprehended with such strong emotional passion. Love is the keynote of this relation."(5)

# b. Loyalty

Another pioneering aspect in the prophetic ministry of Hosea was his leadership of the anti-image movement in Israel. The history of this movement has received considerable difference of opinion. This is especially true of its

<sup>1.</sup> Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion Its Origin and Development, p. 207.

<sup>2.</sup> Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, p. 162.

<sup>3.</sup> Noyes, C., The Genius of Israel, p. 351.
4. Houghton, Hebrew Life and Thought, p. 187.
5. Bewer, J. A., Literature of the Old Testament, p. 98.

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earlier stages. According to Hebrew tradition, images were first prohibited by Moses. The practice of the Hebrews in the time of the Judges was not, however, in harmony with the second commandment of the Decalogue. As a result of this observation many modern scholars have concluded that the Decalogue could not be Mosaic, but that it must have come from a much later date. They maintain that Hosea first made an issue of image worship which culminated a century later in the Deuteronomic reform. (1)

Hosea is considered to be the iconoclast, since he was the first to scorn and ridicule the worship of images. (2) God could not be represented by an image. Such symbolism was utterly unworthy. God was living (1.10), but the calves were idols, the work of craftsmen.

> "And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of the craftsmen." 13.2a

God had endowed the people with the very silver and the gold of the idols. (2.8) Those who sacrificed images were regarded with sarcastic scorn (8.5, 6; 10.5; 13.2).

"Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." 13.2b Hosea's scornful laughter had been called God's laughter. (3)

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament, p. Ibid., p. 109. p. 109.

<sup>2.</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>3.</sup> Mc Fadyen, J. E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 208.

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This attitude as shown by Hosea suggests that his antipathy to images was not new. If it had been, Hosea would have laid a basis for the new teaching. The prophets were not innovators, but reformers. If Hosea would have started the anti-image movement, it does not seem probable that it would have become the law of the country within a century. Deuteronomic reform needed a longer time for preparation. References also are made regarding the prohibition of "molten images" in Exodus 20.23 and 34.17, which are pre-Hoseanic.(1)

It is not certain when the antipathy to images arose in Israel. There are no conclusive reasons why it should not be dated back to the time of Moses. Although the silence of Elijah and Elisha has been the basis of an objection to this view, it must be recognized that the ministry of these prophets was confronted with the more serious task of maintaining the existence of the religion of Yahweh. The record of their work is limited also.(2) There is one doubtful passage in the book of Amos that may be an attack on idols or false gods. (3)

> "Yea, ye have borne the tabernacle of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves." Amos 5.26

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament, p. 110. 2. Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>3.</sup> Smith. A. C., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 341.

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The ministry of Amos was chiefly concerned with the establishment of social justice. T. H. Robinson concludes that Amos left no record of an objection to idolatry.(1)

Hosea's protest against image worship was an outstanding advance in religious thought. He went further than any of his predecessors. We must not conclude, however, that Hosea's conception of God was like our modern view of God. It is not clear that he started from the idea of pure spirituality. He does seem to have realized that God could not be represented by any material form. (2) Image worship had been tolerated by other prophets, as it was nominal Jehovah worship: "But Hosea saw its utter paganism, its moral worthlessness, and stigmatized it as fundamentally the old Baal worship".(3)

Hosea advanced beyond Amos and declared that the Israelitic worship of his days was the worship of Baal. (4) He saw that the syncretistic worship was confusing and corrupting the life of Israel. (5) It was Hosea who first clarified this relationship of corrupted worship and morals. (6)

> "Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning." 8.11

<sup>1.</sup> Robinson, T. H., Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 83.

<sup>2.</sup> Soares, T. G., The Social Institutions and Ideals of the Bible, p. 226.

<sup>3.</sup> Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 112.
4. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, p. 65.
5. Harrell, C. J., The Prophets of Isfael, p. 33.
6. Cf. Knudson, A. C., Op. Cit., p. 112.

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Prostitution was such a prominent feature of the Canaanitic religion that the prophets spoke of all idolatry as going 'whoring' after other gods.(1) Jehovah was still worshipped in name but "in conception and practice the idea of Jehovah's nature was being colored by the conception of the Canaanitish Baal, or Baalim ... . The importance of worshipping Jehovah suffered from a certain disadvantage in the common mind, because He was not the natural possessor or Baal of the land .... Israel did not know that it was Jehovah who "gave her the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal" (2.8). Jehovah was not regarded as the God of nature.. "(2) Protest against the identification of Yahweh and the Canaanite Baals had been expressed in the Yahawistic and Elohistic narratives and legislation, but Hosea was the first to utter a distinct and emphatic protest.(3) W. R. Smith writes this comprehensive summary: "Through the experience of his own life .... Hosea was able to develop with inmost sympathy his doctrine of the moral union of Jehovah to Israel, and to transform a conception which in its current form seemed the very negation of spiritual faith, full of associations of the merest nature worship, into a doctrine of holy love, freed from all carnal alloy, and separating Jehovah for ever from the idols with

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Knudson, A. C., The Beacon Lights of Prophecy, p. 112. 2. Orchard, W. E., Oracles of God, pp. 65 - 66. 3. Peters, J. P., The Religion of the Hebrews, Volume V, pp. 217 - 225.

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which His name had till then been associated."(1)

### c. Repentance

Chapter 14 of the Book of Hosea contains "the prayer of true repentance".(2) In the discussion of its authorship in Part II of this thesis it was shown that some commentators have considered this chapter to be a later addition written by a spiritual disciple. Although no dogmatic conclusion could be given, it was decided that Chapter 14 was more in keeping with the life story of Hosea, and that he could reasonably be considered as its author. As C. F. Kent says, "Its theme of repentance is .... that which is most characteristic of Hosea's message as a whole."(3)

George Adam Smith states that "Hosea may be accurately styled the first preacher of repentance".(4) He is Israel's earliest Evangelist; he is the first prophet of Grace. Hosea was a pioneer in the knowledge of Divine Grace. It is not an exaggeration to say that there is no truth uttered by later prophets about the Divine Grace, which is not found in Hosea. (5) "Isaiah of Jerusalem was a greater statesman and a more powerful writer, but he had not Hosea's tenderness and insight into motive and character. Hosea's marvelous

5. Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>1.</sup> Smith, W. R., The Prophets of Israel, p. 182. 2. Kent, C. F., The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, 100.

<sup>3.</sup> Ibid., p. 100

<sup>4.</sup> Smith, G. A., The Twelve Prophets, p. 333.

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sympathy both with the people and with God is sufficient to foreshadow every grief, every hope, every gcspel, which make the Books of Jeremiah and the great prophet of the Exile exhaustless in their spiritual value for mankind."(1)

To Hosea Israel was not a society of wicked and righteous; it was "a single moral person" which had sinned and must repent as one man. Amos had not looked for national repentance; the wicked remained wicked.(2) To Hosea repentance of the nation was resurrection from the dead.

> "Come, and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him." 6.1-2.

Hosea did not teach that judgment was penal; the purpose of it was to teach Israel that Jehovah alone was the husband of During the days of the exile Jehovah would call Israel. and Israel would return. (3)

> "They shall walk after Jehovah, who will roar like a lion, for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west.

> "They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I

The Twelve Prophets, p. 230.
The Prophets of Israel, p. 188. 1. Smith, G. A.,

<sup>2.</sup> Smith, W. R.,

<sup>3.</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

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will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Jehovah." ll.10-ll

Hosea's most simple definition of repentance is returning to God. "For turning and re-turning the Hebrew language has one verb, shubh".(1) There are instances in the Book of Hosea where it is used as turning (7.16; 14.5), but the verb usually means returning (2.9; 8.13; 9.3; 11.5). The meaning of the verb is generally not merely to turn or change, but to turn right round, to turn back.... This is obviously the force of its employment to express repentance."

(2) Hosea usually added the name of God or designated Him.

"And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:

yet they have not returned unto Jehovah their God,

nor sought him, for all this." 7.10

"Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good." 14.2a

"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God." 3.5a

"Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God." 5.4a

Smith, George Adam, The Book of the Twelve Prophets,
 2. Ibid., p. 335 - 336.

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According to Hosea, repentance was not a change of directions, but it was a turning back upon one's self, a retracing of one's footsteps, a confession.

"O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

"Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah:
say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept
that which is good: so will we render as bullocks
the offering of our lips.

"Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our own hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." 14.1-3.

Hosea taught that repentance was necessary for forgiveness, that it was a condition for restoration.(1) He
also taught that forgiveness was granted by words of penitence
and confession, not by sacrificial offering (14.2). With
the forgiveness of sin was the healing of Israel's long years
of apostasy.(2) Thus was the depth of God's nature again
revealed.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him."

14.4.

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Eiselen, F. C., The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, p. 379.

<sup>2.</sup> Cf. Kent, C. F., The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 100.

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"No man's doctrine of repentance is intelligible without his doctrine of God; and it is because Hosea's doctrine of God is so rich, so fair and so tender, that his doctrine of repentance is so full and gracious."(1)

## d. Knowledge of God

Hosea was the first prophet who taught the basic requirement for Israel's restoration.(2) He recognized their dire need for a knowledge of God. As he saw the unfaithfulness of Israel to the God of their fathers, he knew that their sin was grounded in ignorance.(3)

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." 4.6a

"There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land." 4.1b

"For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold, which they used for Baal." 2.8

"Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them." 11.3

To understand what Hosea meant by "knowledge", it is necessary that the word be examined in his language. The

<sup>1.</sup> Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 338.

<sup>2.</sup> Cf. Hawley, C. A., The Teaching of the Prophets, p. 64.
3. Bewer, J. A., The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development, p. 98.

. . ۵ gra g -; t o 4 0 9 . Ç  Hebrew root "Yadha" is almost exclusively translated in the Old Testament by the English verb 'to know' which is used in the various processes of knowledge. (1) Hosea did not emphasize so much "the acquisition as the impression of facts. G. A. Smith states that Hosea described the knowledge of God as feeling, character, and conscience".(2) From Hosea's frequent use of the phrase, "the knowledge of God", it may be concluded that he meant "religious insight, an intelligent, moral, and experimental appreciation of the nature and purposes of Jehovah". (3)

Hosea taught that there were two means of knowing God: (1) by the Torah, (2) by the events of history. The Torah, made parallel in one instance to knowledge (4.6), was evidently the judicial, ceremonial, and social instruction that was preserved by the tradition of the priests. Hosea referred to the Torah only in connection with the priests. Hosea especially used the second means of establishing a knowledge of God. So frequently did he refer to the events of the past that the entire history of Israel can almost be rebuilt in the Book of Hosea. (4)

Hosea's analysis of Israel's need marks him as a pioneer in promoting religious experience. To know God was a

p. 325.

<sup>1.</sup> Cf. Smith, G. A., The Book of the Twelve Prophets, p. 321. 2. Ibid.,

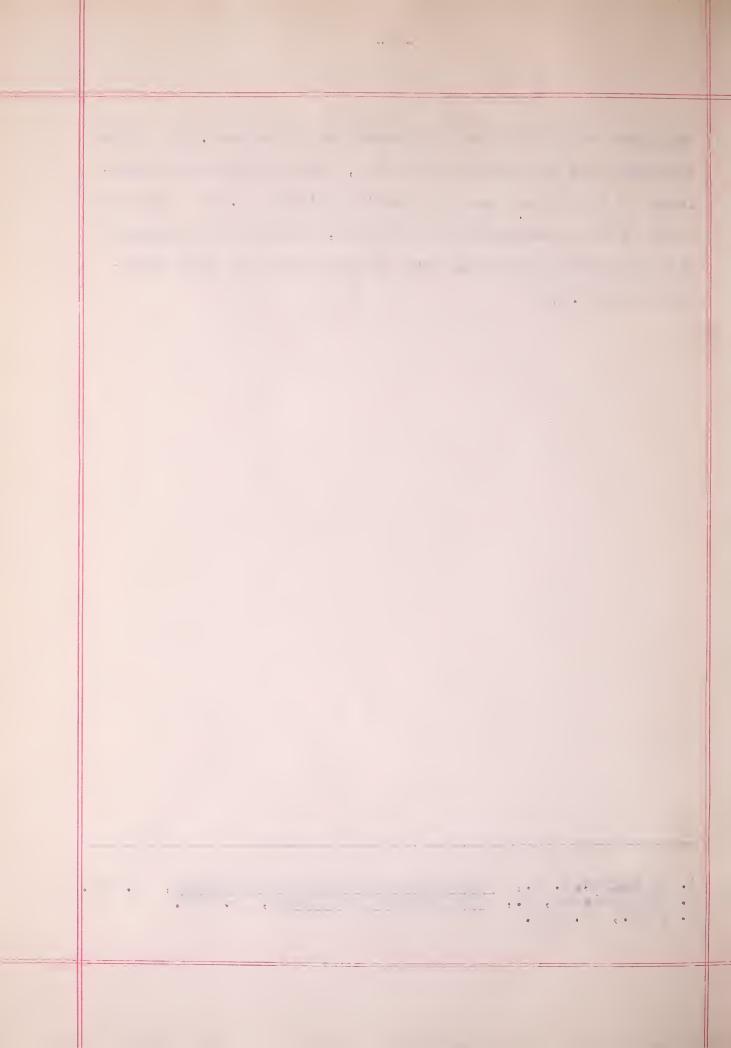
<sup>3.</sup> Cf. Peritz, I. J., Old Testament History, p. 185. 4. Cf. Smith, G. A., p. 326., Op. Cit.

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challenge of fidelity to the demands of conscience.(1) Since ignorance was the cause of all evil, Hosea regarded the know-ledge of God as the sum of Israel's aspirations.(2) "Nothing could be more characteristic of Hosea, nothing more consonant with his views in general than the revelation of this fundamental truth."(3)

<sup>1.</sup> Mc Fadyen, J. E., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 208.
2. Buttenwieser, M., The Prophets of Israel, p. 249.

<sup>3.</sup> Ibid., p. 249.



## VII Summary.

In the treatment of this thesis, "Hosea as a Religious Pioneer", the material has naturally divided itself into three major groups: (1) the source material, (2) the life of Hosea, (3) his pioneering contributions. As a basis for this entire study, it seemed very essential to investigate the Book of Hosea which, with the exception of some extra-cannonical material, furnished the only source material for this study. So closely was the life of Hosea bound with his prophetic ministry that an understanding of his personality served to deepen the power of his creative message. To have gleaned Hosea's contributions from his book without considering his life would merely have been the reading of signs along the road of religion.

In dealing with the major source material the subject matter was first considered as a whole. The divisions of the book were noted on the basis of historical evidence and content. Chapters 1 to 3 were written toward the close of the reign of Jeroboam II. The conditions in the second division, Chapters 4 to 50 reflected the period in Israel's history which followed the death of Jeroboam II. A detailed outline of the Book of Hosea was included for its illustrative and practical use. The book, with the exception of the biography in the first chapter and the secondary material, was accredited to Hosea. The extent of the secondary material does not

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change the fundamental message.

Since few facts are known of the prophet's personal life, the introduction to Hosea has largely been based on evidence and conjecture. Although it has been suggested that Beeri was the name of a tribe, it is commonly accepted that Hosea was the son of Beeri (l.l). Hosea's poetic skill, his manuscript, and his judgment of the history of his nation suggest that he was an educated man. Cases regarding his occupation have been constructed by various students of his life, but no adequate agreement has been reached. Since the Book of Hosea was written from his experience, an intimate insight into his life was noted in his style and in his imagery. The range of the imagery suggested not only his "poetic sensibility", but also his sympathetic nature.

Hosea's marriage was interpreted as a vision, as an allegory, and as a real experience. Those who supported the marriage as a vision were Kimchi, Hengstenberg, Keil, Wünsche, Töttermann, and Maimonides. This view could not be defended exegetically. The group of scholars who maintained that the marriage was an allegory were De Wette, Schröder, Hesselberg, Hitzig, Schmoller, Reuss, and König. This interpretation was not accepted since symbolism was often a pedagogical method used by the prophets. Parabolicalism was not suggested in the narrative of Hosea. The chief opposition toward this view, however, was the moral difficulty which was not removed.

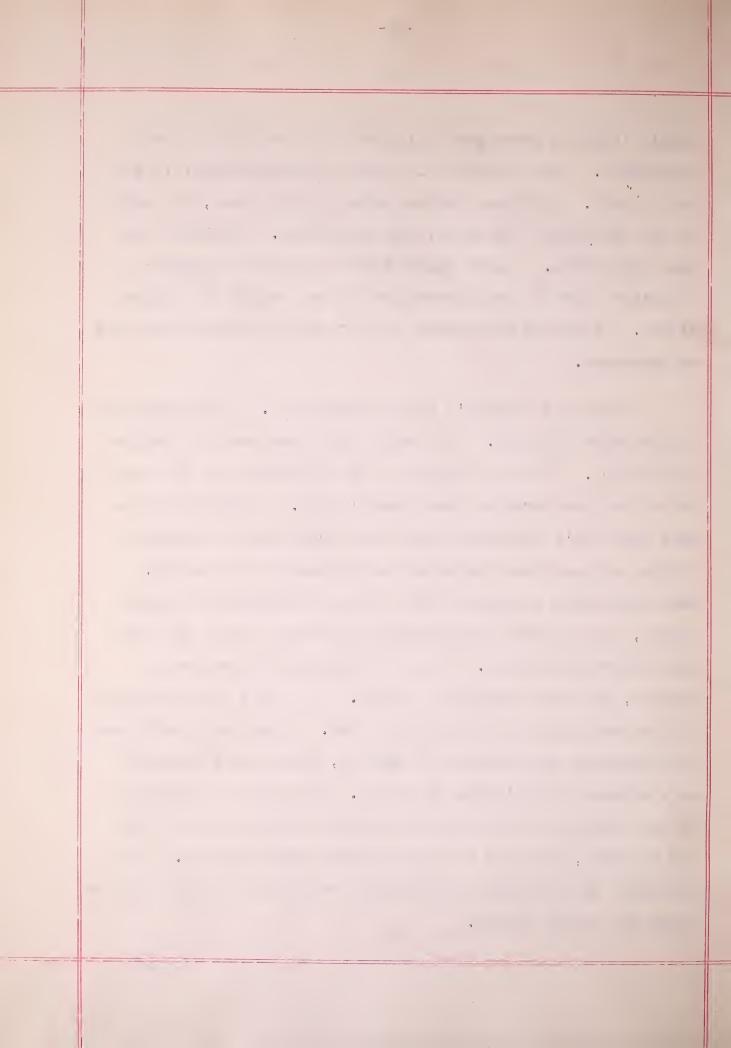
4 · · · · ( 9 ς t , , e e e e · \_ a c ; • • • • • • • 4  Hosea's marriage in this thesis was accepted as a real experience. Chapter 3 was regarded as a supplement, as another phase of the experience in chapter 1. Thus Gomer was not an adulteress at the time of her marriage. There is consistency in this conclusion. Although some students have maintained that Hosea's domestic tragedy led him to become a prophet, it was noted from the text (1.3) that Hosea's call to prophecy came before his marriage. This experience, it was noted, greatly influenced his prophetic ministry. By tracing the analogies of his experience with Gomer to God's covenantal relation with Israel, Hosea gained an understanding of the eternal and profound nature of Divine Love.

Two references, 1.1 and 1.4, place Hosea's prophetic career in the reign of Jeroboam II. The last eleven chapters reflect a period of anarchy which imply that the greater part of his ministry was after the reign of Jeroboam II. The date that was accepted for his ministry was 750 to 735 B.C. The problems which confronted Israel, as Hosea saw them, were political, moral, social, and religious. The political leaders were tools of social anarchy. Tribal laws were not enforced. Abuses were not corrected. The fertility cult was also promoted by the court. National decay had begun, but Israel did not know it. Hosea regarded Israel's international policy as an expression of disloyalty to God. The unstable political life of Israel led to lawlessness in society.

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Family life was destroyed by impurity and society by theft and murder. The religion of Israel was superficial; it was not ethical. Although God was worshipped in name, the Baal of the Canaanites was worshipped in reality. Idolatry was also introduced. Hosea charged the condition of Israel's religious life to the priests who had not taught the people of God. Israel's fundamental sin of unfaithfulness was based on ignorance.

Hosea was "Israel's first evangelist". He proclaimed a redemptive religion. He taught that love was the essence of religion. From the prophet's own experience he knew that God's love was stronger than Israel's sin. From history he knew that God's persistent care for Israel was an expression of His love and that His mercy was stronger than His Law. Like Amos Hosea recognized that religion consisted in right living, but to Hosea the incentive for right living was more than observing the Law. To him morality was promoted by motives, by inner springs of action. To Hosea the violation of the Law signified disloyalty to God. Since he taught that righteousness was promoted by motives, Hosea was recognized as a pioneer in religious education. His chief contribution to the doctrine of God was found in his instruction that God was merciful, that His love was stronger than His Law. The spiritual worth of this contribution established a constructive power for social ethics.



known. In his great eagerness to instruct Israel in a knowledge of God Hosea selected 'hesed', a Hebrew word which means goodness, mercy, and kindness. He also selected figures of speech that were in the range of Israel's experience. He likened God to a physician, to a savior, to a husband, to a father. The idea of God as a Husband to Israel was not original with Hosea, but was used in the earliest time of the Semitic religion. The figure of fatherhood was suggested in Exodus. It was also used in the fertility cult. Hosea's description of God's Fatherhood greatly enriched the doctrine of Divine Love.

In his use of the term 'hesed' Hosea established the conception of a new bond between God and Israel which was more than a legal compact; it was a bond based on reciprocal love. Never before had this relation between God and Israel been comprehended with such earnestness. In the recognition of this bond Hosea became an iconoclast in the anti-image movement of Israel. He was the first to ridicule the worship of images. Although there is no certainty when the antipathy to images arose, it is evident that Hosea's position was an advance in religious thought. He regarded image worship as a form of paganism. Hosea advanced beyond Amos since he declared that the Israelitic worship of his time was fused with Baalism. He saw the dangers of syncretistic

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worship and as a pioneer uttered a protest against the identification of God and the Canaanite Baals. Hosea was the
first prophet of repentance. Hosea taught that confession
was necessary for forgiveness and restoration. He may also
be recognized as a pioneer in the promotion of religious experience; his chief concern was that Israel should have a knowledge of God.

The contributions of Hosea were not limited to one phase of religious thought, but they were noted in three distinct groups: the essence of religion, the nature of God, Israel's response to God. Hosea's leadership presented the following pioneering aspects: (1) religion is an act of love; (2) morality is motivated by love; (3) religion is love and law; (4) Divine love is stronger than the Law; (5) God is love; (6) God is merciful; (7) God desires a reciprocal love; (8) repentance is necessary for forgiveness; (9) a knowledge of God is the basis for restoration.

As a result of his creative leadership Hosea was recognized as the first evangelist of Israel, as a pioneer in religious education, as a pioneer in the development of the doctrine of God, as an iconoclast in the anti-image movement in Israel, as the first prophet of repentance, and as a pioneer in the promotion of religious experience.

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